



**1<sup>st</sup> MEETING of the COMMITTEE on CAPTIVE BREEDING,  
REINTRODUCTION and SUPPLEMENTATION of LESSER WHITE-  
FRONTED GEESE in FENNOSCANDIA**  
*07 - 08 May 2008, Bonn, Germany*

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**APPROVED TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**1. Rationale**

The Committee for Captive Breeding, Reintroduction and Supplementation of Lesser White-fronted Geese in Fennoscandia (hereinafter called the Committee) is a thematic sub-group of the International Working Group for the Lesser White-fronted Goose, *Anser erythropus*. It is a platform for exchange of information and for coordination, and, if possible, future agreed action between the Range States to the Fennoscandian population of the Lesser White-fronted Goose. It guides the future activities on captive breeding and release into the wild of the species in Fennoscandia, while taking full account of the development of the remaining wild Fennoscandian population. The Committee has been established in response to an agreement reached in January 2007 (AEWA, 2007).

**2. Role**

The Committee's role is to provide technical advice and practical guidance in form of recommendations on the issues of captive breeding, reintroduction and supplementation of Lesser White-fronted Geese (LWfG) to the countries represented, thereby ensuring close cooperation between the countries on this issue.

The Committee carries out assigned technical tasks, elaborates and actively shares its findings and recommendations, and regularly reports on its progress and activities to the International LWfG Working Group. The Committee actively contributes to the implementation of the LWfG International Single Species Action Plan and ensures consistency in the coordination and the implementation of conservation actions for the Fennoscandian population<sup>1</sup>.

**3. Composition**

The Committee comprises representatives of the Range States to the Fennoscandian LWfG population and includes Finland, Norway, Sweden, and representatives from Germany as observers<sup>2</sup>. Governmental representatives are invited to bring their national experts to the consultations and meetings of the Committee. The Secretariat of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) facilitates the Committee and convenes its meetings on behalf of the participating countries.

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<sup>1</sup> For these Terms of Reference, 'Fennoscandian population' refers to the wild Fennoscandian population and the Swedish free-flying stock of introduced birds.

<sup>2</sup> Germany's observer status is considered temporarily by the members and will be re-evaluated to join the group as full member at a later stage

#### **4. Overall Goal and Objectives**

The overall goal of the Committee is to conserve and restore the wild Fennoscandian population of Lesser White-fronted Geese to a favourable conservation status.

In accordance with the objectives of “Results Area 4” of the LWfG International Single Species Action Plan, the Committee’s objectives are:

- 1 - No introgression of DNA from other goose species into the wild population occurs as a result of past and further releases.
- 2 - Alien DNA introgression from birds released in the past is minimised.
- 3 - The members to the Committee, supported by thematic expert advice and coordination between countries, are effectively guiding the implementation in Fennoscandia of ‘Result Area 4’ of the International Single Species Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose.

#### **5. Principles**

In carrying out these Terms of Reference, the Committee for Captive Breeding, Reintroduction and Supplementation of LWfG in Fennoscandia [and the represented institutions] will be guided by the following principles:

- (a) The states represented in the Committee have an important role to play with regard to the conservation of the wild LWfG population in Fennoscandia. The same holds true of other Range States for this population. To assure a favourable conservation status of Fennoscandian LWfG throughout their life cycle, the Committee should give pragmatic advice on issues relevant to all states to which the wild population applies.
- (b) The main priority for conservation action and recommendations by the Committee is oriented towards the wild populations breeding in Fennoscandia and Russia, according to an agreement found in January 2007 (AEWA, 2007).
- (c) All efforts must be made to ensure that captive breeding and release activities are environmentally risk-averse, particularly concerning the risk from introgression and accidental influx of alien DNA into the wild population. The Committee shall thoroughly examine and closely monitor any other measure which might have the potential of putting the wild population at risk before its application.
- (d) Recommendations by the Committee shall be made with openness and transparency; the same applies to examinations leading to the establishment of recommendations carried out by or on behalf of the Committee. Based on the recommendations of the Committee, the activities and their environmental impact should be monitored to allow, if necessary, recommendations to be modified or withdrawn over time. Any work of the Committee should follow the codes of transparency and accountability, so they can be subject to scientific scrutiny at any time.
- (e) The recommendations and guidance regarding captive breeding, reintroduction and supplementation provided by the Committee shall strive to:
  - (i) Involve best local, national and international expertise
  - (ii) Be derived from best scientifically-recognised methods, data and information available

- (iii) Where necessary take account of additional information from impartial, independent studies (e.g. external reviews or feasibility studies)<sup>3</sup>
  - (iv) Be developed and conveyed in a transparent manner
- (f) To this end the Committee strives to function as a clearing house mechanism for the relevant information and data from the stakeholders for its reviews, evaluations and recommendations. Accordingly, the stakeholders should facilitate access to relevant data and information from the respective experts. The property rights of those involved in the collection of data shall be respected to allow an early information disclosure to the Committee and their earliest-possible evaluation. Any raw data will be for information purposes only and shall not be published or otherwise used by the group.
- (g) The work of the Committee should follow the principle of the ‘precautionary approach’<sup>4</sup> towards the common objectives of preventing further hybridisation and spreading of alien genes to minimise the impact on wild LWfG populations to prevent further decline of the Fennoscandian population.

## 6. Scope

- (a) The Committee provides the opportunity for coordination, cooperation and concerted advice by the Breeding Range States to the Fennoscandian LWfG population on the given issues, with direct support by recognised experts from science, other Range States, civil society or other sectors. It builds upon the agreement found between participating states during a negotiation mission by AEWA in January 2007 (AEWA, 2007).
- (b) The Committee is an active advisory body. As a sub-set to the LWfG International Working Group, the Committee’s recommendations on captive breeding, reintroduction and supplementation shall contribute to the implementation of the International Single Species Action Plan for the Western Palearctic population of the Lesser White-fronted Goose, *Anser erythropus*.
- (c) The Committee will provide the guidance considered necessary by the members of the Committee for the effective conservation of the Fennoscandian LWfG population, on a proactive and continuously constructive basis. Within the scope of this mandate, the Committee will be free to seek any additional information from its invited experts. The Committee also responds to specific requests for guidance on relevant issues within its mandate and as considered appropriate by the Chair.
- (d) Any guidance and conclusions should make clear reference to the agreement found between states in January 2007 (AEWA, 2007). Reference should furthermore be made, where appropriate, to the recommendations from the Report of the Scientific Council of the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS, 2005) on issues that have not been subsequently updated and amended by the agreement from the AEWA negotiation mission (AEWA, 2007).
- (e) National and local initiatives, specific activities and institutions shall be informed by the Committee of its most recent findings, and advised that they are expected to follow its conclusions and recommendations.

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<sup>3</sup> If recommendations to be made have important implications for conservation, recreational use and/or industry, they should be based on a full scientific review of both data quality and analysis that can be independently verified.

<sup>4</sup> Definition: “A response to uncertainty in the face of risks to health or the environment. In general, it involves acting to avoid serious or irreversible potential harm, despite lack of scientific certainty as to the likelihood, magnitude, or causation of that harm.” (IUCN, 2005)

- (f) The Committee's substantive focus shall initially be the approval of the relevant sections of the revised LWfG International Single Species Action Plan (to be adopted in September 2008), followed by practical guidance to their implementation.
- (g) The Committee's geographic focus shall be on the range of the Fennoscandian population.
- (h) Where considered necessary and deemed relevant for the successful completion of its tasks, the Committee shall seek information from thematic experts in related fields and/or establish dialogues with other advisory groups.
- (i) The Committee will, in its first inception meeting, develop a vision, verify the objectives of its work and agree on a listing of priority activities and tasks to be turned into preliminary work plans. Overall, successive work plans will help assure the establishment of joint and proactive recommendations on the issue of LWfG captive breeding, reintroduction and supplementation in Fennoscandia. This and other upcoming developments may warrant appropriate amendments to the Terms of Reference set forth here.

## **7. Responsibilities and Tasks of the Committee**

- (a) Review and make recommendations on the long-term future of all captive breeding programmes in the represented countries, including existing programmes as well as potential new programmes:
  - (i) Assess and evaluate captive breeding as part of a strategy for securing the long-term survival of the Fennoscandian LWfG population in the wild through reintroduction, while ensuring that any future releases of captive-bred birds involve only individuals reared from wild-caught stock unless the group recommends otherwise by consensus~~only~~;
  - (ii) Assess the feasibility, guide and monitor the building up of a captive breeding stock of birds, using birds from the remnant wild LWfG populations in Norway (action depending on: the outcomes of a feasibility study, logistic considerations, and agreement with the measures recommended by the LWfG International Single Species Action Plan);
  - (iii) Guide and monitor the establishment and implementation of the Swedish captive breeding programme exclusively based on wild birds;
- (b) Receive, provide and review all available relevant information related to the Swedish free-flying population of LWfG, in a timely and well-documented manner, and recommend plans for population refinement, supplementation or alternative conservation measures as appropriate:
  - (i) Assess whether the existing studies and proposals take account of the best available scientific knowledge; identify information gaps and sources of uncertainty for the implementation of certain conservation measures;
  - (ii) If necessary, seek and secure any additional information that this may require, if necessary through independent review and evaluation;
  - (iii) Assess the feasibility of a population refinement<sup>5</sup> (i.e. selective capture & removal of apparent hybrids) from the established free-flying population from Sweden;

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<sup>5</sup> Based on available information, latest credible estimates of the ratio of DNA introgression into the wild population, and based on the findings of a new feasibility study for refinement of the Swedish reintroduced flock.

- (iv) Elaborate and agree on a concrete plan of actions to implement or guide the population refinement, or other conservation measures as applicable and agreed;
  - (v) Monitor and regularly report on the removal of apparent hybrid LWfG from the Swedish introduced stock;
- (c) Proactively provide advice on conservation and policy implications of applying certain measures, while interpreting existing knowledge and information gaps in a manner that reflects precaution:
- (i) Assess whether studies, assessments and proposed mitigation plans are adequate to ensure that the proposed activities will not have adverse impacts on the wild Fennoscandian LWfG population;
  - (ii) Provide coordinated recommendations and advice on captive breeding, reintroduction and supplementation of the species to the LWfG International Working Group. Committee advice should focus on the implementation of the relevant section of the International Single Species Action Plan for the Palearctic Population of the LWfG;
  - (iii) As a group, advise respective states and initiatives on adequate timeframes and principles for implementation of new reintroduction projects and initiatives;
- (d) Actively contribute to the sustainable functioning and financing of the Committee.

#### **8. Role and Responsibilities of the Chair and Facilitator**

- (a) Act as the impartial convener of the Committee, thereby providing an important platform for exchange of information and for collaboration, and, if possible, future agreed action on the aspects of captive breeding, reintroduction and supplementation of LWfG in Fennoscandia;
- (b) Facilitate consensus-building and the formulation of recommendations between the Committee members concerning the development of appropriate conservation measures;
- (c) Effectively link the relevant stakeholders between meetings of the Committee;
- (d) Provide secretariat support e.g. through establishment, negotiation and management of consultations on behalf of the Committee, in accordance with these Terms of Reference and the Committee's Rules of Procedure;
- (e) Make available relevant reports and materials used and produced by the Committee via an appropriate information platform (e.g. website) for the Range States to which the LWfG International Single Species Action Plan applies;
- (f) Actively contribute to the sustainable functioning of the Committee to ensure the long-term protection of the species in Fennoscandia.

#### **9. Funding**

- (a) In 2008, funding for the establishment and coordination of the Committee will come mainly from a grant provided by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management to the AEWA Secretariat.
- (b) Each participating country is asked to contribute to the sustainable financing of the Committee's activities. A suitable mechanism for the long-term financing of the Committee as of 2009 will be subject to the group's discussion as of its first meeting.

- (c) Each participant is required to cover own costs of travel and subsistence for meetings of the Committee, or be sponsored by his/her respective institution or government.
- (d) The AEWA Secretariat can efficiently fulfil extra duties only if a supplementary budget for such activities is available.

#### **10. Term**

It is foreseen that the Committee shall operate for an initial period of 5 years following its first meeting in May 2008. The term is extendable as considered necessary and useful, subject to agreement with the AEWA Secretariat and the participating governments.

#### **11. References**

AEWA 2007. Final report from the Lesser White-fronted Goose negotiation mission in January 2007. AEWA Secretariat, Bonn. Unpublished report.